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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 29, 2006

In Today's Papers

Erdogan Participates in Arab League Summit in Khartoum
Hurriyet, Milliyet, Vatan, Sabah, Cumhuriyet, Radikal, Yerni
Safak and others: Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan met
with Syrian President Assad, King Abdullah of Jordan,
Palestinian President Abbas, Lebanese President Lahoud and
Prime Minister Siniora, and UN special representative for
Iraq Ashraf Gazi on the sidelines of the Arab League Summit
in Khartoum yesterday. President Assad told Erdogan that
Syria views the most recent UN report on the Hariri
investigation as positive. 'The report has reduced
tensions. We are thankful to Turkey,' Assad said.
Addressing the summit yesterday, Erdogan warned against a
'widening fault line' between the West and the Islamic
world, and stressed that extremist groups on both sides are
exploiting the situation. Erdogan urged Muslims to refrain
from violence. He also warned that anti-Muslim laws passed
in EU countries and the US would incite tensions. 'Turkey
has a cultural proximity to the Arab world,' Erdogan said:
'Thus, contributing to the stability, security and
prosperity of the Arab world is among Turkey's primary
goals.' Erdogan noted that Turkey wishes to see a stable
and politically unified Iraq which is at peace with its
neighbors. 'It is crucial that the strain between religious
sects is defused, and the vicious circle of violence is
halted in Iraq before they reach an irreversible point,'
Erdogan emphasized, adding that a broad-based government
representing all groups will be in the best interest of the
Iraqi people and the region. Erdogan called on the new
Palestinian parliament and the government to work in
coordination with President Abbas to meet the expectations
of the international community. 'The revival of the peace
process on the basis of the road map should be the primary
goal,' Erdogan stressed. Erdogan also noted that reforms
initiated by the Arab League are timely and appropriate.
'The more we respect universal values such as democracy,

human rights, gender equality, the supremacy of law, transparency, and pluralism, the more likely we are to contribute to regional and global peace,' the Turkish PM concluded. Papers underline that ten Arab leaders, including Saudi King Abdullah and Egyptian President Mubarak, stayed away from the summit, and nearly half of Arab League members were represented at a relatively low level.

ATC Conference in Washington

Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Cumhuriyet, Radikal, Zaman and others: State Minister Kursad Tuzmen told the 25th annual gathering of the American-Turkish Council (ATC) and Turkish-American Business Council (TABC) in Washington that it was 'time to increase trade between Turkey and the United States to 30 billion USD.' 'Turkey is the world's 22nd biggest exporter and 14th biggest importer. General Electric has invested 1.8 billion USD in Turkey. We will carry on with tight fiscal policy and expand our macroeconomic goals,' Tuzmen stressed. He noted that the private sectors in both countries must put more pressure on both governments to promote commercial ties.

Joost Lagendijk, co-chairman of the Turkey-EU joint parliamentary commission, said at the conference that the EU decision to admit Cyprus to the Union before solving the Cyprus issue had been a mistake. Lagendijk said the EU had failed to meet its pledges to end the isolation of the Turkish Cypriots. Lagendijk called on Turkey to abide by its responsibilities embodied in the EU Customs Union protocol, warning that a crisis looms in October or November if Turkey does not grant Greek Cypriots access to Turkish ports and airports. Lagendijk claimed that Prime Minister

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Erdogan had failed to meet his pledges for democratic moves aimed at solving the Kurdish problem, and that the Kurds had failed to produce a leader to press for democratic reforms in Turkey. He also criticized the Turkish government for failing to take steps to meet the demands of religious minorities. Lagendijk said he believed the Turkish government wants to delay reforms on the minorities issue until elections that will be held in 2007. Meanwhile, Turkish Defense Industry Undersecretary Murad Bayar told the ATC that Turkey plans to buy 100 new generation warplanes worth 10 billion USD. Turkey will choose between the US-led Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) and the Eurofighter by the end of this year.

Riots in Turkey's Southeast

Hurriyet, Milliyet, Aksam, Vatan and others: Serious clashes occurred in Diyarbakir between police forces and protesters during a funeral of four of the fourteen PKK terrorists killed in Mus recently by Turkish security forces. The clashes erupted when protesters chanted pro-PKK slogans and attacked police after the funeral. The protesters attacked armored police vehicles with stones and firebombs, smashed the windows of a police station and stabbed two policemen in Diyarbakir. Police in Diyarbakir used tear gas against the protesters. 22 protesters, 10 policemen and two journalists were injured during the clashes, and police detained 23 protesters. Hurriyet reports that police and protesters clashed during a funeral ceremony in Adana as well. DTP Adana chairperson Leyla Guven reportedly attended the protests. There were also clashes in Batman during a PKK funeral. Hurriyet blames Roj-TV for yesterday's incidents. According to Hurriyet, Roj-TV urged all shopkeepers in Diyarbakir to close their shops during the funeral. 70 shops, 3 banks and a health clinic that did not heed this call were attacked by PKK supporters with stones and firebombs.

AKP Deputy Abdullah Caliskan Comments on the US and Israel
Milliyet reports that during his speech at the 'European Parliamentary Assembly' in Brussels, AKP Adana deputy Abdullah Caliskan said 'The US and Israel have been involved

in terrorist activities since the day they were established. The US and Israel continue to occupy countries in the Mediterranean and the Middle East. Today, the US affects the peace and the stability negatively by threatening Iran and Syria. The EU, should stop following the in US' footsteps.' Caliskan was applauded by Arab deputies and criticized by the Europeans after his remarks. Caliskan stressed that his remarks reflect his personal views rather than those of the Turkish Government.

Commentaries on the Israeli Elections

In his column in the leftist Birgun, Mete Cubukcu says Kadima hopes to legitimize the Israeli security wall and finalize the Israel-Palestine border during its upcoming term. "Despite the lack of international support for this approach, Israel has not given up and has American backing. By using the negative position of Hamas, Israel is planning to make this into a fait-a-complis. But even Abbas will have a hard time accepting a border imposed unilaterally by the Israelis. The Kadima plan includes an attempt to put Jerusalem under full Israeli control and turn it into Israel's official capital. This would undoubtedly unleash a wave of fury in the region. The election results constitute a historic step toward the two-state formula, but only time will tell how realistic this idea proves to be."

Writing in mainstream Milliyet, Sami Kohen says that the

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type of government that will be formed is more important than the election in Israel. "The initial election results indicate a victory for Kadima, which is not a surprise. The real surprise is the poor showing by Netanyahu's Likud. This election was important and historically significant for Israel. Israeli voters had to choose between the new ideas presented by Kadima or a doctrine of unilateralism. Olmert will not be able to turn his back on the unilateralists as long as Hamas continues to refuse to recognize Israel. Therefore, the new Hamas government of Palestine should change its position and heed the advice of Mahmoud Abbas."

TV Highlights

NTV, 8 AM

Domestic News

- Turkish Foreign Ministry denied press reports claiming that German Chancellor Merkel asked Prime Minister Erdogan to play a mediating role to prevent a US attack against Iran.

- EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn said the Cyprus issue could cause trouble in ties between Turkey and the EU this year, stressing that skillful diplomacy was needed to prevent 'a train wreck.'

- Turkey is preparing for a rare total solar eclipse with some 100,000 foreign tourists arriving in the Mediterranean city of Antalya to observe the event today. The eclipse will be best observed in 13 Turkish provinces for four minutes along a distance of 190 kilometers.

International News

- Israel's Kadima Party, led by Ehud Olmert, is expected to send 29-31 representatives to the 120-seat Knesset. The second-place Labor Party won 20-22 seats, according to exit polls.

- More than one million demonstrators took to the streets across France on Tuesday to protest a new law that reduces job security for young workers.

- Greek Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyannis said the UN must launch a new Cyprus initiative. The Greek Cypriot press said British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw is examining the possibility of starting direct flights to Turkish Cyprus.

Economy News

- Finance Minister Unakitan said the government is preparing to implement VAT discounts in tourism and other sectors in Turkey, a move that many commentators have said is contrary to Turkey's agreement with the IMF.

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